

Guidelines for Writing Letters To The Editor

- All letters should be typed, if possible, or neatly written. They should be signed and include the author's address and home and work phone numbers. Newspapers often do not print letters from people they cannot reach to confirm authorship.
- An effective format for a letter is: a topic paragraph, several paragraphs elaborating the writer's views, and a conclusion. This lets editors cut for space and still allows the message to get across.
- Most newspapers typically suggest a length of 200-400 words for letters to the editor. Letters which are too long may be significantly cut or not placed at all.
- Try to keep the letter's tone reasonable and lively at the same time. Bland and dull letters or emotional outbursts or personal attacks are less likely to be printed.
- Do not make false or misleading statements. Be sure to verify facts and quoted material.
- Timing is important. A letter has the best chance of being printed if the issue you are writing about has been in the news, but be creative in looking for opportunities. It also helps to give your letter a local slant. Point out your legislator's position and that local citizens are working on this issue.

If your letter is printed, please send us a copy:

Common Cause/Grassroots Department
1250 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036

 You also may want to send a copy of your letter, particularly if it is printed, to your Members of Congress. Addresses for Congress:

The Honorable _____

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515